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## FACTS ABOUT

### Court Interpreters Program Unit of AOC Human Resources

#### **Overview:**

The U.S. Census Bureau counts 224 languages and many dialects in California, the most linguistically diverse state in the nation. To ensure equal access to the law for witnesses, victims, and defendants who understand little or no English, California courts are required to retain specially trained interpreters. In criminal and juvenile proceedings, the state bears the cost of interpreter services. The AOC Human Resources (HR) Division's Court Interpreters Program (CIP) unit coordinates the statewide court interpreter program on behalf of the Judicial Council.

#### **Services:**

The CIP unit focuses on:

- Improving the quality of interpreting through interpreter testing, certification and continuing education;
- Facilitating the use of interpreters in the courts through training and developing systems for the trial courts;
- Increasing the number and availability of qualified interpreters in the trial courts through recruitment and outreach efforts;
- Supporting the Judicial Council's Court Interpreters Advisory Panel in recommending policies to the Judicial Council regarding interpreter certification, discipline, etc.; and
- Coordinating implementation of all legislation pertaining to interpretation, such as the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act (SB 371). This includes supporting the SB 371 Implementation Administrative Working Group. (*See separate fact sheet on SB 37-implementation initiative.*)

#### **Certified Interpreters**

The Judicial Council has designated 14 languages in which interpreters can be certified: American Sign Language, Arabic, Armenian, Cantonese, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. To become certified, they must pass both written (general vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar) and oral components (simultaneous and consecutive interpreting) as well as sight translation testing.

#### **Registered Interpreters**

Interpreters of languages for which there is no state certifying examination are called "registered interpreters of non-designated languages." To become registered interpreters, candidates must pass an English proficiency examination covering basic vocabulary, grammar, word usage, reading comprehension, and must demonstrate a clear understanding of state rules and regulations regarding interpretation.

#### **Milestones, Background, and Future Directions**

January 1993. Senate Bill (SB) 1304 goes into effect and requires that the Judicial Council:

- Designate the languages for which certification programs will be established;
- Approve one or more entities to certify Spanish-language interpreters and interpreters of as many other languages as the council designates;

- Adopt and publish guidelines, standards, and procedures to determine which certification entities will be approved;
- Adopt standards and requirements for interpreter proficiency, continuing education, certification renewal, discipline, and professional conduct;
- Adopt programs for recruitment, training, continuing education, and evaluation to ensure that adequate numbers of interpreters are available and that they interpret competently; and
- Establish fee guidelines or set fees for applications to take the interpreter examination, for certification or renewal of certification, and for certain other functions.

January to December 1994. Then Chief Justice Malcolm M. Lucas appoints the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel, which convenes and begins to implement the requirements of SB 1304.

June 2002. The CIP unit and AOC launch the “One Law, Many Languages” interpreter awareness and recruitment campaign, which, compared to 2001, results a tenfold increase in visits to the interpreter portion of the judicial branch website, [www.courtinfo.ca.gov](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov), a fourfold increase in telephone inquiries, and more candidates testing for interpreter qualification.

Summer to Fall 2002. The new, Web-based Court Interpreter Data Collection System (CIDCS) goes online and 56 of the 58 trial courts use it to report data on interpreter use. The CIP unit coordinates a statewide conference for interpreter coordinators in the trial courts to train coordinators on the CIDCS and update them on recent developments related to trial court interpreters.

September to November 2002. The Governor signs Senate Bill (SB) 371, the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act. AOC HR’s CIP unit coordinates the SB 371 Implementation Administrative Working Group to execute the requirements of the new law (see related fact sheet on SB 371 statewide implementation initiative).

**Court Interpreters Advisory Panel:**

Hon. Eileen C. Moore, Chair	Hon. Donal B. Donnelly	Hon. John M. Pacheco
Mr. Alejandro Alcántara	Mr. Gregory Drapac	Ms. Kaoru Tamura
Ms. Judy Arasé, Ph.D.	Mr. Lorenzo Hurtado	Mr. Melvin Toomer
Mr. Mark A. Arnold	Mr. José O. Guillén	Mr. Hiram Torres
Ms. Kate Bancroft	Ms. Olivia Johnston	Mr. Michael A. Tozzi
Ms. Lourdes Campbell	Mr. Tony Moon	Mr. Nestor Wagner
Ms. Mary Majich Davis	Hon. Dan T. Oki	Mr. Richard Weatherby

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